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VISITORS TO THE HOUSE

Why bother with visitor training?

Getting into a good routine right away pays dividends down the road. You and your dog will both know what to do, and your guests won't get jumped on.

How to prepare.

Step 1. Decide the following:

- Where will your dog be when guests knock or ring the doorbell?
(In his crate? In his confinement area? On leash?)
- How will you introduce your dog to guests?
(Ask for a sit? Keep him on leash? Or keep him in his confinement area and introduce him once everyone is inside and settled?)
- How will you reward your dog for greeting guests politely?
(Offer him a treat? Allow him to mingle freely?)
- What behaviors does your dog know that might be helpful?
(Sit? Down? Stay?)

Step 2. First, practice without guests. Get out your dog's mat, treats, etc. Have someone ring the doorbell, and go through whatever plan you have settled on. Practice a sit by the door, for example.

Step 3. Next, invite a friend or family member over and practice your visitor routine. Start small – one person first, then, once that is going well, invite a couple of people.

After the visit.

After your guests leave, assess how the visit went.

- What did your dog do well?
- What needs extra practice?
- Is there anything you want to do differently next time?

Training Tip: If visitors are coming and you don't have time to train, put your dog in his crate or confinement area with some things to chew on. Don't give him the opportunity to learn bad habits.

Troubleshooting: If your dog is having trouble with your visitor routine, be ready to reward more frequently and ask for something easier. For example, if you were asking for a sit-stay when the doorbell goes off, instead ask for a quick sit, then release your dog to say hello.